

critical digest

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Oct 3, 1956 Vol IX No. 1. The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter \$25 year \$6.50 quarter

This Week

The Loud Red Patri-Ambassador 10/3. Krakeur, Douglas, Wayne production of Joseph Boruff adaption of Ruth McKenny novel. Stars Arthur Kennedy, David Wayne. Robert Douglas directs.

Harbor Lights-Playhouse 10/4. Anthony Parella presents new play by Norman Vane. With Linda Darnell, Robert Alda, directed by Thomajon.

Sixth Finger in A Five Finger Glove-Longacre 10/8. Caplin & Fingar production of new comedy by Scott Michel, directed by Harold Bromley.

I Am A Camera-Actors Playhouse-10/9. Whitman, Conescu, Pruneau revival of 1951 Van Druten comedy with Sally Kemp.

Reluctant Debutante-Miller 10/10. Gilbert Miller production of new English comedy by William Douglas Home, directed by Cyril Ritchard.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Take A Giant Step- Jan Hus 9/25. 3 rave votes and one mild con vote recorded for revival of Louis Peterson's 1953 play presented by New Theatre Company. Times, Herald Tribune and Post reviewers applauded vigorous production of play about Negro adolescence. Atkinson, Times, cheered Bill Gunn for portraying the leading role with freshness and beauty in the robust and knowing second hearing of the script. Beckley, Herald Tribune, recommended play as one that ought to be seen by anyone interested in the contemporary theatre. Entire cast, as well as Ira Circker's direction and Richard Jackson's sets in the 74th St basement theatre were applauded by both critics. Watts, Post, doubted if Gunn was quite as appealing as Louis Gossett who created lead role, but critic thought Gunn handled part believably and well. Post reviewer agreed with colleagues that play deserves a second chance. Sole dissenter was McClain, Journal American, complimented all concerned for a good job, but feared that play falls short due to the fact that the boy's self pity looms larger than that felt by the audience.

Judy Garland Show-Palace 9/26. 6 rave notices, 1 mild notice (from McClain, Journal American) heralded the return of Judy Garland, a favorite of critics and audiences. A song has not really been sung until Judy pulls herself together and belts it through the theatre, sums up Times man. Perfect, concluded Kerr, Herald Tribune. Coleman, Mirror, reported that she garnered thunderous applause and deserved every bit of it. Socko, sensational, dynamic, adds Donnelly, World-Telegram & Sun. Watts, Post, voiced minor criticism that her act might have been staged with more imagination, but found her winning ways as potent as ever. McClain, Journal American, feared that her 1951 Palace show was better. Supporting acts in first half of bill-including Alan King and Bob Williams were applauded by all the reviewers.

The National Theatre on W. 41st has been sold by Shuberts to Harry Fromkes, former owner of Playhouse Theatre. He paid \$900,000 cash and will change the name of the theatre to the George M. Cohan Theatre at the conclusion of the run of Inherit the Wind. The Shuberts still must dispose of the St. James Theatre by Feb 1958 in accord with the anti-trust decree.

Plays

Hatful of Rain will close Oct 13... Saint Joan will close Oct 21... Cat on a Hot Tin Roof will close Nov 17... Major Barbara which opens at Martin Beck Oct 30 will switch to Morosco Nov 19... Protective Custody to bow Jan 7... Ziegfeld Follies now slated for Feb 28 at Winter Garden with Bea Lillie starred... Maxwell Anderson to write musical version of The Guardsman... Dylan Thomas' Under the Milkwood will be presented in NY next season... O'Neill's Marco Millions to be presented at City Center... Anna Christie musical to bow May 8... Uncle Willie slated for Dec 3 bow.

Players

Bramwell Fletcher replaced Tom Helmore as stand-by for Rex Harrison, My Fair Lady... Maureen Stapleton to star in Light a Penny Candle... Chele Graham graduated from chorus to replace Neile Adams, Pajama Game... Brenda de Banzie to make US debut in Speaking of Murder... Mildred Dunnock to star in Child of Fortune... Kathryn Grayson to make NY debut in Not for Marriage musical by Richard Ney... Professional Children's School opened new quarters at 132 W 22... Abraham Pincus, author of First Night, (written under pen-name A. P. Mollison) died at age 47.

Other Broadways

Erlanger Theatre, Buffalo, to be converted into office building... Gertrude Berg to tour in Arsenc and Old Lace... 12 week winter stock season to open at Palace Theatre, Fort Wayne... Berlin 1945 by Erich Maria Remarque received 30 curtain calls at Berlin debut... Mary Martin considering 4 week stands each in Peter Pan at London, Melbourne, Sydney, Hong Kong... Noel Coward's Nude with Violin opened in Dublin. Play runs for 3 hours... Toronto hit musical Salad Days rejected 8 week engagement at NY Bijou Theatre.

Summer Playhouses

Boothbay Playhouse, Maine, purchased by Lenthall-McAnney-Wilmot Productions... White Barn Theatre, Irwin, Penn, reports its best season... Bellaire Playhouse, Highmount, NY, refused certificate of compliance by NY State Labor Dept... Toledo Shakespeare Under-Stars Festival dropped by Toledo Zoological Society after first season loss of \$67,000

Legal Dept.

Theatre broker license of Sylvia Siegler suspended for 6 months after 2 month hearing by NYC Dept of Licenses. Broker was accused of "loose and informal" business methods.

Theatre TV Notes

Robert Weede, Most Happy Fella, will portray Scrooge in NBC-TV Dec 23 Christmas Carol musical... NBC TV seeking Tallulah Bankhead for TV version of Little Foxes... Leonard Bernstein will present musical lecture on musical comedy on Oct 7 Omnibus-ABC-TV... Key Largo to be presented on NBC TV Alcoa Hour



OFF
BROADWAY

Camille closed at Cherry Lane...
Abssalom production at Carl Fischer Hall cancelled... Once Upon An Island will be presented by Onyx Productions at Davenport Theatre Nov 7.

Margaret Bannerman and John Anderson featured in Thor, With Angels... Blackfriars open season Oct 17 with The Comedian featuring Tom McDermott and Sasha von Scherler... Frances Foster replacd Luana Knighten who died of heart attack 2 nights before opening of Take a Giant Step... William Cottrell has withdrawn from Hamlet, and has been replaced by Philip Lawrence,.. Diary of a Scoundrel moved opening to Nov 4.

The Arrow Maker by Mary Austin will be revived with an all-American Indian cast Oct 2 at Davenport, sponsored by Junalusak, a member of the Cherokee tribe. .. Two triple bills of Pirandello are slated this season. Open Stage will present The Imbecile, Sicilian Limes and The Vise on Oct 15 and Artemis Productions will present at Barbizon Plaza -- Chee Chee, The Jar and Judgement of the Court.

Johnny Johnson revival will feature James Broderick opening Oct 21 at Carnegie Hall Playhouse.... Phoenix will cancel Oct 13 and Oct 14 matinees of Saint Joan to permit Siobhan McKenna to rehearse for TV version of The Letter ... Venture Productions will operate from Actors Playhouse, 100-7th Ave South... Elisabeth Allen, Barbara Joyce, Robert McQueeny will join Helen Hayes in cast of Lovers, Villains and Fools ANTA benefit at Theatre De Lys Oct 23.

THEATRE

BOOK



COMMENTS

"Bernard Shaw, His Life, Works and Friends" by St. John Ervine(Morrow) is a long (628 pages), lively biography, rates Atkinson, Times. 50 of his 94 years are recorded with fresh detail making the book a major work in the field.

"Les Girls" by Constance Tomkinson(Atlantic, Little Brown) is dull account of author's adventures as dancer in 1930's with Folies Bergere and other groups. Cover suggests more bawdy fun than book contains, sighs Down, Variety.



THEATRE

OUT OF

TOWN

The Lark and The Chalk Garden continue in Los Angeles... No Time for Sergeants, The Boy Friend and Witness for the Prosecution still in Chicago... Damn Yankees playing Dallas... Janus with Joan Bennett in Cleveland... Inherit the Wind with Melvyn Douglas in Cincinnati.

Tryouts of The Apple Cart, Li'l Abner, Too Late the Phalarope in Boston... Auntie Mame, Best House in Naples, Happiest Milionaire, Reluctant Debutante in Philadelphia.

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GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT

HEALTHY STATE... Current verbal battle on merits of US and British theatre launched by Helen Hayes is viewed as a healthy state by London Times editorial. British daily granted that there are no English writers capable of making the vital impact on a big public that is made by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. British theatre on the other-hand is in a state of restlessness. Writers there are trying to cast off the fetters of naturalism and they strain towards the more poetic and fantastic interpretations of life. Until somebody has found the unmistakable way towards a new kind of theatre statement, paper concludes, audiences can do nothing much beyond splitting into sections each backing its own fancied pioneer.

COLUMN TIPS... Gretchen Wyler will take over for Gwen Verdon, Damn Yankee, hears Winchell... Theatre Guild wants to produce Shaw's In Good King Charles Golden Days notes Walker... Shaw estate netting \$5000 per week from NY productions, sums up Lyons... Sammy Davis will quit Mr. Wonderful in March, reports Kilgallen.

DRAMA MAIL-BOX... Hawkins, former World-Telegram-Sun critic, notes to Variety that he did not quit because his copy was edited, but because he felt he was through with the job... 4 Times readers cheered article on "Lost Words"; one reader complained that she missed many words even though she always sat in first few rows of orchestra... Avant garde plays that make the viewer suffer instead of being entertained, were panned by a "C. D" subscriber.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... NYC is a Tivoli Gardens on a vast scale in which almost anything can be found, details Chapman, News... Gena Rowlands' performance in Middle of the Night has vastly improved along lines suggested by critics, reports Watts, Post... Arthur Miller should try his hand at adapting Brothers Karamazov for wife Marilyn Monroe, suggests Donnelly, World-Telegram & Sun.

LIBRARY BIRTHDAY... 25th anniversary of NY Public Library Theatre Collection was opened by Lillian Gish. "Theatre Highlights 1673-1956" exhibit will be shown on main floor lobby. Gish recalled that she was first actress to use the theatre collection in 1931 when studying Camille, which she revived at opening of Central City, Colo, Opera House. Chapman, News, commented that it is a great city and a great country when such research advice can be had for free.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Irene Hawthorne's Autobiography makes her the bravest woman on Broadway, Peper, WT & S, believes. She borrowed the money to put on her own one-woman show... Fernando Lamas, Happy Hunting, decided to accept role in Merman musical after he sang two songs at his Church of Religious Science, Los Angeles, he told Herridge, Post.



" PROS & CONS BY T.M.K. "

Take A Giant Step is a warmly written play of a Negro youth's growth. Inspite of a fine 1951 Broadway production, the play flopped. The 1956 production at Jan Hus House, the first presentation of New Theatre Company, is equally fine. Acting, direction and setting are ideally suited to the wide basement stage at East 74th St. Discouraging fact is that at second night, after three rave reviews, the house was only half filled. This beautiful play does not deserve to fail twice.

* * *

Judy Garland Show at Palace is exciting for two reasons. The first is the obvious talent of the star. The second is the equally obvious and explosive enthusiasm the audience has for her. Being part of an audience that cheers, screams and stamps the floor for more is an experience unlike any other in the current theatre.

* * *

The cheers and enjoyment of the supporting bills at the Palace by the audience at the Judy Garland Show is evidence that Vaudeville is not as dead as most theatre owners think. Two-a-day vaudeville, like burlesque, trained many comedians and actors as well as providing family entertainment at the many houses throughout the city. Maybe it's time to turn some of the super-markets back into vaudeville houses.

* * *

Off Broadway managers who feel they are doing their customers a favor by presenting a short evening's entertainment (from 8:50 PM to 10:30 PM in many cases) because it takes longer to get home from the out-of-the-way houses, are only kidding themselves. With the ever increasing ticket prices Off-Broadway, patrons expect and should get a full evening's entertainment.

* * *

Unless one is to assume that no tickets were sold for the week-end matinees of Saint Joan that were cancelled to allow the star of GBS play to rehearse for an Oct 15 TV performance, the Phoenix Theatre is catering to a dangerous new precedent in theatre. Certainly not every ticket-buyer for matinee or evening seats reads every paper and every drama column. Imagine the wrath of a New Haven or Trenton theatre-fan who came to NY for a Saturday matinee to find that it had been cancelled for the above reason. If this devoted theatre fan ventures to NY again this season, it would probably have to be on the written promise of the management that come hell or TV the theatre attraction will go on.

* * *

The price of a comfortable, but slightly used National Theatre, bought from the Shuberts is \$1 million. Before any bargain hunter pays cash for another NY used house let him journey to Stratford, Conn. Shakespeare Festival to see what he can get for \$2 million.

* * *

London Theatre



Plays

The Devils Disciple will be revived by Tennent and will be seen in London in November after tour starting Oct 15. Tyrone Power stars, and Noel Willman will both direct and play "Burgoyne."... Agatha Christie's long-run hit Spider's Web closes at Savoy Nov 1, it opened Dec 1954. ... Mark Marvin fly to NY to conclude co-producer deal with Roger Stevens for Boy and the Egg to be presented in London this fall.

Players

Rosalinde Fuller presents her one woman show Hearts and Faces Oct 8 and Oct 15 at Arts.

Digests of London Reviews

Children's Hour presented at Arts was panned as a miscast and spiritless production of the Lillian Hellman play by Darlington, Tribune. All of actors are unsuited to parts they portray.

Mother Courage production of Brecht play by Berliner Ensemble panned by Shulman, Standard, who feared play was too often on verge of something between Dr. Calgari and an illustrated lecture.

DRAMA

DESK

REPORT

Shaw luncheon, the first meeting of Drama Desk, the NY Theatre Editors & Reporters organization, featured as guests players and directors of current and coming Shaw works. Charles Laughton and Glynis Johns of Major Barbara, Charles Adams, co-producer of Apple Cart, Moss Hart, director of My Fair Lady, and Jack Balch, director of Arms and Man, and Siobhan McKenna, of Saint Joan were featured.

Laughton and Hart agreed that GBS is a playwright master as well as a playwright of ideas. Each play and character is technically perfect, they pointed out. McKenna thought GBS love-scenes in his Village Wooing is a classic.

As to the reasons for his break-up with Paul Gregory, Laughton would only answer "no comment." Actor-director did admit that he would like to appear in NYC some-day in a "long-hair" revue with his wife Elsa Lanchester.

Hart informed the theatre editors that he is currently working on his autobiography and is pondering directing a comedy on Broadway soon.



" THEATRE CALENDAR "

Arms & Man - Downtown 10/1
Autobiograph - Booth 10/2
Lessons - Tempo 10/2
Love Depths - Contemporary 10/2
Lord Red Patriarch - Ambassador 10/3
Harbor Lights - Playhouse 10/4

6th Finger 5 Finger Gloves - Longacre 10/8

I Am a Camera - Actor's Playhouse 10/9

Reluctant Debutante - Miller 10/10

Daisy Miller - Equity 10/10

Too Late Philanthrop - Belasco 10/11

Pirandello Plays - Open Stage 10/15

Me , Candido - G. Mews 10/15

Double in Hearts - Golden 10/16

Hamlet - Shakespeare's Globe 10/17

Comedian - Blackfriars 10/17

Apple Cast - Plymouth 10/18

Johnny Johnson - Carnegie Theatre 10/21

Lili Abner - St. James 10/22

Sea Gull - 4th St. 10/22

Richard II - W. Garden 10/23

Separate Table - Music Box 10/25

Happiest Millionaire - Barrymore 10/29

Major Barbara - Beck 10/30

Auntie Mame - Broadway 10/31

Sleeping Prince - Coronet 11/1
Diary of Scoundrel - Phoenix 11/4
Sheating '57 - Barbizon 11/5
Long Day's Journey Into Hell 11/7
Tea Time August Moon - City Center 11/7
Best House in Naples - 11/8

Protective Custody 11/7

Child of Fortune - O'Farrell 11/13

Very Special Baby - Davenport 11/15

Once Upon a Island - Davenport 11/15

Girl of Summer - Longacre 11/19

Night of the Aus - 11/19

Candide - Beck 11/22

Build With One Hand - 11/28

Bells are Ringing - Shubert 11/29

Happy Hunting - Majestic 12/6

Uncle Willie - 12/3

Everybody Loves Me - 12/10

Good Woman of Settsun - Phoenix 12/11

Small War on Murray Hill - 1/2

Visit to Small Planet 1/9

Light a Penny Candle - 1/16

Walls of Toreadors 1/17

Duchess Mall - Phoenix 1/22

Quare Fellow 1/7
Best Steinbeck - Playhouse 2/1
13 Daughters - W. Garden 2/8
Measure for Measure - Phoenix 2/19
My Royal Past 2/21
Hole in Head 2/28

" OFF BROADWAY " " THEATRE PROGRAMS "

5 Sher Sq 6 Pro. Times, Trib, Mir, J. Am, Post, WT & S
OR 5-9437 OR 5-9437

SAINT JOAN 5 Pro-Times, Trib, Post, Variety, Women Wear
Phoenix \$3.85 TE 2-9220

NO EXIT 21E 60 12th & 2nd

T. East AL 4-9525 2 Cons. - J. American, World-Tel-Sun

3 PENNY OPERA 121 Chriss. 3 Pros. - Times, Trib, Post

De Lys \$4.85 WA 4-8782

UNCLE VANYA 83 E 4 4th St. 7 NYC daily - okayed

OR 4-5710

4th St.

"TV THEATRE PROGRAMS"

10/6 - CBS Your The Top - Cole Porter Festival, Shirley Jones, Gordon McCrane, etc

10/28 - NBC - Born Yesterday - with Mary Martin on Evans Show.

11/24 - NBC - High Button Shoes - with Nanette Fabray

11/25 - NBC - Man and Superman - Maurice Evans on Evans Show.

1/57 - NBC - Come and Go - with Old Vic

4/57 - NBC - Great Sebastians - with the Lunts.

"C. D. VIEWS CURRENT SHOWS"

PROS
Damn Yankees, Diary Anne Frank, Inherit Wind
No Exit, Iceman Cometh, Uncle Vanya
Family, Middle Night, Will Success

CONS

Oct 5, 1956 PLAYGOERS GUIDE chart of CRITICAL DIGEST 139 E 47, NYC--EL 5-6944

This weekly chart of CRITICAL DIGEST, the weekly NYC theatre newsletter, presents up-to-minute data on current business and critical reception of all current Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Subscribers to CRITICAL DIGEST may write or phone for any other specific data or for late reviews.

"C." Critics' figures refer to percentage of PRO notices filed by NYC daily drama critics. PRO means show was recommended as entertaining and/or stimulating; not if critic predicted if show would be a hit.

"B." Business-figures refer to percentage and grosses ticket sales of last week and preceding weeks. "%" figures refer to last week's attendance. "Cap"-figures refer to capacity of house. Figures that follow are gross estimates of Variety for last week and preceding weeks. All figures are in thousands of dollars. Thus--"Cap \$41-\$14 \$1" means that capacity of house is \$41,000, last week gross sales \$14, preceding week \$16,000, etc.

CAT HOT TIN ROOF Morasco \$6.90 217 W 45 90% C- Chapman, News, sole con vote
C1 6-6230 65% B- Cap \$31-\$23 \$21 \$23 \$20 \$19 \$19

DAMN YANKEE 46th St-\$8.05 226 W 46 100% C- Unanimous approval musical & cast
C1 6-4271 100% B- Cap \$50-\$50 \$49 \$44 \$48 \$47 \$47 \$42

DIARY A. FRANK Cort \$5.75 138 W 48 100% C- Unanimous approval Palliser, Pinter
C1 5-4289 95% B- Cap \$28-\$23 \$20 \$22 \$20 \$21 \$22

FANNY Majestic \$7.50 245 W 44 50% C- Con vote by Truh, Mir, Post, J. Am
C1 6-0730 65% B- Cap \$62-\$38 \$31 \$33 \$30 \$29 \$25 \$26 \$27

HATFUL RAIN Plymouth \$5.75 230 W 45 70% C- 3 Con votes - Mir, Post, J. Am
C1 6-9156 60% B- Cap \$23 \$16 \$14 \$13 \$14 \$14 \$11 \$11 \$8 \$10

INNER WIND National \$5.75 208 W 41 85% C- Funkie, Times, sole con vote
PE 6-8226 85% B- Cap \$31-\$28 first week re-opened

JUDY GARLAND Palace \$7.50 1564 Bway PL. 7-2826 100% C- Unanimous raves for Judy & Show

MATERMAKER Royale \$5.75 250 W 45 90% C- Watts, Post, filled sole, con vote
C1 5-5760 55% B- Cap \$31-\$19 \$15 \$18 \$14 \$12 \$12 \$14 \$13 \$13

MIDDLE NIGHT ANT A. \$5.75 250 W 52 20% C- 2 Pro Play-Mir, J. Am, 100% for Robinson
C1 6-8870 70% B- Cap \$40-\$28 \$21 \$20 \$23 re-opened Aug 27

MR WONDERFUL Broadway \$7.50 1681 Bway C1 7-2887 10% C- Chapman, News, sole pro show 100% Davis
80% B- Cap \$71-\$43 \$43 \$43 \$48 \$50 \$46 \$45 \$41

MOST HAPPYFELLA Imperial \$7.50 246 W 45 00% C- Unanimous raves for musical & cast
CO 5-2412 100% B- Cap \$48-\$58 \$58 \$58 \$58 \$58 \$58 \$58 \$58

" RATINGS OF NYC CRITICS "

1955-56 season ratings of NYC drama critics on current Broadway shows by Critical Digest. "%" figures are percentages of pro votes in comparison to con votes of current shows. Variety figures are percentages of favorable reviews written for an entire season.

	C. D. %	PROS	CONS	Variety '55-'56
Atkinson, Times	60%	10	6	.490 .607
Kerr, Herald Tribune	55%	9	7	.394 .394
Chapman, News	80%	13	3	.527 .580
Coleman, Mirror	65%	11	5	.454 .566
Watts, Post	50%	8	8	.541 .426
McClain, Jour. Am	80%	12	4	.535 .532
Hawkins, WT & S	65%	11	5	.396 .548

" LONDON OPENINGS "

Oct 4- Doctor's Dilemma- Sayville
Oct 11- View from Bridge- Comedy
Oct 23- Much Ado About Nothing- Old Vic
Nov 12- Barrault- Renaud- Palace
Nov 15- Fanny- Drury Lane
Dec 10- Country Wife- Royal Court

